BIOGRAPHY

GRUPO NICHE

Performing at the 1994 Calle Ocho Festival in Miami marks the second time Grupo Niche will perform on a Marlboro Music stage. Last year, they performed at the Marlboro Music concert at the Pan-American Festival in Chicago.

Jairo Varela Martinez was born on December 9, 1949 in Quibdo, Columbia. His family always supported his interest in music and it was his mother who gave him his first guitar when he was eight years old.

Jairo Varela Martinez stayed in Quibdo until the 1970s, when he and his family moved to Bogota. It was there, in 1980, that he formed Grupo Niche. The musicians, all from Choco, were Nicolas Cristancho (piano), Francisco Gracia (banjo), Ali "Tarry" Garces (saxophone and flute), Alexis Lozano (trombone and arranging), Jorge Bassan and Hector Viveros (singers), and Luis Pacheco (congas).

Grupo Niche's music broke with traditional salsa. Verela's songs drew attention to the problems of Blacks, with all the social and ethnic implications. He also sang about his land, his home, his country's problems and its poverty. His music and lyrics won much support in Columbia. Later, Varela expanded his repertoire to include songs about love and all its complexities.

El Grupo Niche's recording debut was in 1980, and since then they have released about one album per year. In 1990, a new singer from Bogata, Charly Cardona, joined the group. Their most recent LP is "Un Alto En El Camino" (Sony).

Grupo Niche has participated in international festivals, appearing on many of the great stages of the world. In its long and fruitful artistic journey, Grupo Niche has won gold records, countless awards, and respect and recognition from people all over the world.

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